

The Enquiry of Sir Crisp Gascoyne, Knight

Late Lord Mayor of the City of London, into the Cases of *Canning* and *Squires*; with its whole Conduct, and Letters and Informations. Addressed to the Worthy Liverymen, and Citizens of London, and the People

THIS is the only Account of the intricate Affair between *Canning* and *Squires*, whereby any Judgment can be formed of the whole Transaction. It is a Letter to the Liverymen of London, &c. to clear up the Matter in its proper Light.

Sir Crisp, in his Address to the Liverymen of the City of London, first returns them Thanks for the Honour they had done him, in choosing him Lord Mayor; and lays before them the Reasons of now publishing his Conduct, and why he deferred it so long. He speaks in these words.

But before I proceed to the intended relation, permit me, to declare the true reason of my delaying it so long.

The trial of *Elizabeth Canning* (from the sentence upon whose accusation I assisted in rescuing the innocent convict) was yet depending; and I well knew the weight my justification must have against her. I chose therefore to dispense with the injuries my silence countenanced, rather than pursue a remedy at her expence. But now that restraint is at an end, and I can speak with freedom, I shall state my whole conduct, and my motives to it, with that observance of truth, and with that plainness, it becomes me to speak before you.

This is the introduction this magistrate makes for not publishing any thing to vindicate his conduct before this time. He then repeats some account of *Squires*, the gipsy's trial; and says he thought the story very improbable, and as two men from *Abbotsbury* had appeared, and sworn that the gipsy, with her son and daughter, were at that town when the robbery was said to be committed; and as there appeared no cause to suppose these countrymen should come above a hundred miles to swear themselves, he directed Mr. Ford to write the following letter to the minister of *Abbotsbury*, who was an entire stranger to him, but whose acquaintance he now cannot too much esteem.

To the Minister of *Abbotsbury*, in Dorsetshire.

S I R,

I am honoured with the Commands of my Lord Mayor, and in his presence I write to you upon the following occasion.

At this present Session *Mary Squires*, an old gipsy, was convicted of robbing *Elizabeth Canning* on the 2d of January last, at *Endfield* in *Middlesex*.

The principal witnesses in support of the Prosecution were *Canning* herself, and one *Virtue Hall*, who gave positive evidence against her.

In her defence, *John Gibbons* and *William Clark* of your parish as positively attested, that she, with her son *George* and daughter *Lucy*, came there 1st of January, quartered at *Oibsons*, and stayed there till the 9th, selling lawns, handkerchiefs, cheques, and the like.

The convict is so very remarkable, 'tis as impossible that any of the witnesses can be mistaken in her person, as that different accounts can be true.

She is at least 70, tall, and stoops; her face is long and meagre, her nose very large, her eyes very full and dark, her complexion remarkably swarthy, and her under-lip of a prodigious size.

Where the perjury lies is a question, You, Sir, by enquiry in your parish, may easily resolve; the facts sworn to by your parishioners being such, as must be notoriously true, or notoriously false.

If true, God forbid she should suffer, and if false those men ought not to escape with impunity.

The end of this letter carries with it so good an excuse for the trouble it may give you---'tis needless to add to it.

If there is the life of a fellow-creature in one scale, there is the character of a young girl in the other; whose sufferings, if real, deserve universal pity.

The sacred function you bear is a security to his Lordship for your humanity, and your justice.

To your account, you'll be pleased to add, what are the characters of *Gibbons* and *Clark*. I am,

S I R,

Your most humble servant,

London, 24 Feb. 1753.

T. FORD.

Please to direct to me in *Aldermanbury*.

To this letter that worthy Divine was pleased to return the following Answer,

S I R,

My regard for the Public, and my respect for the great name mentioned in your letter, would have obliged me to have answered it sooner had I been at home. But I spent the last week with a friend a few miles off, and did not return till Saturday night. I find that since your writing several of my neighbours have joined in an affidavit fully describing the person of *Mary Squires*, and proving her to be at *Abbotsbury* from the 1st of January to the 9th, &c. which affidavit I suppose you have before now. However, I have this morning sent for several of my parish who well know this woman and her companions, one particularly with whom they always lodged till this last time of coming

here. And he tells me, that he has known this *Mary Squires* upward of thirty years---That she, with others of that name, and some of other names, have in that space of time often come to his house, sometimes once or twice in a year, at other times once in two or three years---That they (this *Mary Squires* and others) were at his house about three years ago, which was the last time they were at *Abbotsbury* till the 1st of January last. That he often saw them at the house of *John Gibbons* between the 1st and the 2nd of January---That they always went under the denomination of gypsies, that they had goods (as handkerchiefs, apron, gowns, &c. to sell, that they never wanted money, and always paid him very justly for what they had. There being here this last time could be proved by most of the younger sort in my parish, for as it was Christmas-time they had dancing almost every night at the house, and the son and daughter of *Squires* danced constantly with the people of the town---As to the evidences I never knew any thing by them but what was honest, nor do I believe that they would by any means be induced to give a false evidence. If I can be farther serviceable in this affair, you may freely command

S I R,

Your most humble Servant,

Abbotsbury, 5th

March 1753,

JAMES HARRIS,

Vicar of *Abbotsbury*.

On the receipt of this letter I sent to the espousers of the girl, and communicated it to them.

At the same time I shewed them the following Letters and Certificate, which had been transmitted to Mr. Bun, clerk to the late Justice Gundry, by Mr. Willis, then, under-sheriff of *Dorsetshire*, and afterwards, unexpectedly, laid before me in consequence of that worthy Judges directions.

To Mr. Bun, Attorney at Law, in *Chancery-lane*, London.

S I R,

I received yours, and yesterday I sent it inclosed by *George Fens* to Mr. Harris, the Minister of *Abbotsbury*, and desired him to make the best enquiry he could into the affair, and give me as full an account thereof as he could get; but Mr. Harris being at Dr. Dawney's at *Piddletown*, a messenger was dispatched to him with my letter and yours, and on the other side hereof you have his answer, and you have also inclosed a certificate of the church wardens and overseers, and other substantial people of the town, most of whom I well know, and if *Mary Squires* answers the description therein given, particularly as to her under-lip in which she had an evilish disorder, I should think it's pretty clear she was at *Abbotsbury* at the time of the robbery, and tho' it is said in the certificate on or about the first of January. I believe the most of them could be certain as to the day.

Gibbons and *Clark* both came to me the day before they set out for London, to be informed what method to take to be paid for their journey, when they shewed they shewed me the subpoenas they were served with, and said that *George Squires*, (mentioned in the certificate) came down to serve them, and that he waited at *Abbotsbury* to go up with them, and told me the same story as I imagined they proved on the trial; and I since find that *Clarke* fell in love with *Lucey* the young gipsy, & went with them or followed them to *Ridgway*, when they left *Abbotsbury*, and tarried with them a day or two, and both he and *Gibbons* must well remember the old woman, and from what knowledge I have of them, and the information I have from others, I verily believe they are both very honest men, and would not have given the evidence they had not believed it to be true.

If any further information shall be wanted I will readily get it, as it will give me a great deal of pleasure to be instrumental in saving an innocent person's life; and am,

Sir, Your humble Servant,

Dorchester, Feb. 28, 1753.

Robert Willis.

P. S. Since the above I am informed that *Mary Squires* and her son and daughter were at *Liton* before they went to *Abbotsbury*, and that they actually came to *Gibbons's* house on the first of January last (N.S.) and continued there the time mentioned in the certificate, which can be fully proved by many other persons in *Abbotsbury*, and no doubt but it can be proved by others at *Liton*, that they left that place the same day.

We whose names are hereunto subscribed, being the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor, and the principal inhabitants of the parish of *Abbotsbury* in the county of *Dorset*, do hereby certify, That on or about the first of January last past (new stile) there came to *Abbotsbury* aforesaid three persons commonly called gypsies, one of which an elderly man of about seventy years of age, another man about thirty years of age (called *George*) and the other a woman about twenty-six years of age (called *Lucey*) whom the old woman called her son and daughter

and they called her mother---That they entered there at the house of *John Gibbons*, the sign of the *Old Ship*, and continued the space of nine days, under pretence of handkerchiefs, waistcoats, and other goods the old woman was about five feet seven inches high, of a very black rusty complexion, black-eyes, a large nose, and an uncommon under-lip, as big almost as a little child's. We do further certify, that we well know *Gibbons* the landlord of the *Ship-inn* aforesaid, and that we believe them to be persons of good characters, and would on no account give evidence. Witness our hands this 28th of February, 1753.

Edward Thorne, Officer. Daniel Wallis, Pansford. John Bailey Ralph Crisps Tyte, Porter Step Lock Mercer. John Oliver, Churchwardens. Henry Gibbons Richard, Overseers of the Poor Hugh Bond Schoolmaster. Farmer. John Fern.

To Mr. Willis, Attorney at Law, at *Lincoln's Inn*, S I R,

I have reason to believe from common report that there were three persons, who went under the denomination of gypsies, at the house of *Gibbons*, within my parish about the time mentioned in the letter; but their names and personal description utter stranger to me.

As to my neighbours *Gibbons* and *Clark* I believe them to be too honest men to give false evidence. I am Sir, your very humble servant, *Piddletown*, 27th Feb. 1753. JAMES HARRIS, Vicar of *Abbotsbury*.

An affidavit from Mr. Willis, sworn Mayor of *Dorchester*, (sworn by four persons of *Abbotsbury*) was transmitted to me; all which Sir Crisp laid before the friends. He assures the Liverymen, that he and all her family were utter strangers to what he did was in regard to public justice, and chief magistrate of the city of London.

The account Sir Crisp gives as to *Virtue Hall* that being informed by a letter from *John Phillips* (whom he never saw before) that this woman was in the *Gathhouse*, and supported by friends: he sent for her, and she, in company of Sir John Phillips (because the Lord Mayor not think proper to be with her alone) with tears, all she had sworn on *Squires's* Mother Wells, when she was examined in court, told the same story, tho' she was acquainted with *Virtue Hall's* recantation.

Sir Crisp then makes remarks on *Canning's* story. Mr. Alderman *Chitty* further attested that he described the room she had been confined in, a little square dark or darkish room---that he had no mention of any hay being in the room, and that she lay upon the boards.

He likewise added, that she said she had found in the room with her six, and that she left some of the water made her escape.

This account of the room being total different from all the descriptions I had received, and being a model and plan to be taken of it, were produced upon the trial.

This room runs along the east-side of the kitchen, and the entrance to it is from the kitchen by a flight of eight steps, which are cut out of the wall and are part of the room itself: it is about eight inches long, and only nine feet eight inches high. Its wall are only thin lath and plaster, of the coarsest kind, so that any part of it may be broken down with the greatest ease; it has no covering but the tiles.---On the east-side is a casement window, about three foot from the wall and nine feet and one inch from the ground, and had never been fastened, and is large enough for a lusty man easily to get out of. On the west side is the window of which *Canning*, (when she was on the 1st of February) pretended she fell from, about nine yards distant from this window, on which several persons used to slide in the frost in January---and on the west-side of the room there has been for many years a large hook (which a jack-line had passed) which could be brought into the sight of the whole kitchen.

Besides it was most apparent that there was, or ever could have been, a shed or penthouse, or any thing like it under the windows.

So remarkable is this room also in other particulars 'tis impossible those, who have once seen it, ever forget it; 'tis the most insecure place in the world, and of itself bears strong against the account before the magistrate; the observations from thence are obvious, and can be made by any one who will escape You,

Inquiry of Sir Crisp Gascoyne, Knt. and Alderman,

of the City of London, into the Cases of *Canning* and *Squires*; with its whole Conduct and Consequences; with Copies of the Originals. Addressed to the Worthy Liverymen, and Citizens of London, and the People of Great-Britain in General.

here. And he tells me, that he has known this *Mary Squires* upward of thirty years---That she, with others of that name, and some of other names, have in that space of time often come to his house, sometimes once or twice in a year, at other times once in two or three years---That they (this *Mary Squires* and others) were at his house about three years ago, which was the last time they were at *Abbotsbury* till the 1st of *January* last. That he often saw them at the house of *John Gibbons* between the 1st and the 2th of *January*---That they always went under the denomination of gypsies, that they had goods (as handkerchiefs, apron, gowns, &c. to sell, that they never wanted money, and always paid him very justly for what they had. There being here this last time could be proved by most of the younger sort in my parish, for as it was *Christmas-time* they had dancing almost every night at the house, and the son and daughter of *Squires* danced constantly with the people of the town.---As to the evidences I never knew any thing by them but what was honest, nor do I believe that they would by any means be induced to give a false evidence. If I can be farther serviceable in this affair, you may freely command

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and they called her mother---That they quartered there at the house of *John Gibbons*, known by the sign of the *Old Ship*, and continued there for the space of nine days, under pretence of selling handkerchiefs, waistcoats, and other goods.---That the old woman was about five feet seven or eight inches high, of a very black rusty complexion, with black-eyes, a large nose, and an uncommon thick under-lip, as big almost as a little child's arm. And we do further certify, that we well know *John Gibbons* the landlord of the *Ship-inn* aforesaid, and *William Clark*, of *Abbotsbury* aforesaid, cordwainer; and that we believe them to be persons of very good characters, and would on no account give false evidence. Witness our hands this 28th day of *February*, 1753.

Edward Thorne, Officer. Daniel Wallis Mercer G. Pansford. John Bailly Ralph Crofts Tything-man T. Porter Step Lock Mercer. John Oliver John Clark. Churchwardens. Henry Gibbons Richard Hall Overseers of the Poor Hugh Bond Schoolmaster. C. White, Farmer. John Fern.

To Mr. Willis, Attorney at Law, at *Dorchester*.

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Piddletown, 27th Feb. 1753. JAMES HARRIS,
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An affidavit from Mr. Willis, sworn before the Mayor of *Dorchester*, (sworn by four creditable persons of *Abbotsbury*) was transmitted to London; all which Sir Crisp laid before *Canning's* friends. He assures the Liverymen, That *Squires* and all her family were utter strangers to him; and what he did was in regard to public justice, as being chief magistrate of the city of London.

The account Sir Crisp gives as to *Virtue Hall* is, that being informed by a letter from Dr. Hill, (whom he never saw before) that this woman was in the *Gathhouse*, and supported by *Canning's* friends: he sent for her, and she, in the presence of Sir John Phillips (because the Lord Mayor did not think proper to be with her alone) recanted, with tears, all she had sworn on *Squires's* trial; & Mother Wells, when she was examined in *Newgate*, told the same story, tho' she was quite unacquainted with *Virtue Hall's* recantation.

Sir Crisp then makes remarks on *Canning's* trial.

Mr. Alderman *Chitty* further attested, that she described the room she had been confined in to be a little square dark or darkish room---that she made no mention of any hay being in the room, and declared she lay upon the boards.

He likewise added, that she said the number of pieces of bread found in the room were five or six, and that she left some of the water when she made her escape.

This account of the room being totally different from all the descriptions I had received of it, I ordered a model and plan to be taken of it, and which were produced upon the trial.

This room runs along the east-side of *Well's* house and the entrance to it is from the kitchen, by a flight of eight steps, which are cut out of the floor, and are part of the room itself: it is thirty five feet eight inches long, and only nine feet eight inches wide. Its wall are only thin lath and plaster, and of the coarsest kind, so that any part of it may be broken down with the greatest ease; it has no ceiling or covering but the tiles.---On the east-side is an open casement window, about three foot from the floor, and nine feet and one inch from the ground, which had never been fastened, and is large enough for a lusty man easily to get out of. On the north-side is the window of which *Canning*, (when in the room on the 1st of *February*) pretended she escaped; and about nine yards distant from this window, and upon which several persons used to slide during the frost in *January*---and on the west-side of the room there has been for many years a large hole (through which a jack-line had passed) which commands the sight of the whole kitchen.

Besides it was most apparent that thers neither was, or ever could have been, a shed of boards a penthouse, or any thing like it under either of the windows.

So remarkable is this room also in other instances 'tis impossible those, who have once seen it, can ever forget it; 'tis the most insecure prison in the world, and of itself bears strong against *Canning*.

I will not. Gentlemen, mispend your time by comparing the room and its furniture with *Canning's* account before the magistrate; the observations arising from thence are obvious, and cannot possibly escape You,

Mr. Alderman *Chitty* having issued his warrant to apprehend *Wells*, many gentleman, moved by compassion towards the supposed injured Girl, set out the next day to apprehend her; and afterwards *Canning* herself followed in a chaise accompanied by her Mother---When she came there, they could not find any room, which at all answered her description. This room, called the hay-loft or workshop, was the last suspected; neither the room or its contents in any wise agreeing with her account.

It is ready mentioned that *Skarrat* and *Adamson*, after seeing so much hay in this room, tossed up who should go and meet the chaise, and that it fell to *Adamson's* lot.

When the Girl arrived she was placed in the kitchen for near twenty minutes, on full view of this room, the door leading into it being open all the time, yet she appeared totally unconcerned, and never pretended she had been confined in it; but on the contrary, suffered herself to be taken all about the house in order to pitch upon the place of her confinement.

But this is not all---she first upon the stair-case of the house to be the stairs leading to her pretended prison to use her own words, "THESE ARE THE STAIRS I WAS PUSHED UP."---All this her own witnesses admitted, and Mr. *Adamson* acknowledged his surprise at the mistake.

The stair-case of the house directly fronts the street door, is situate between the parlour and the kitchen, has no communication with the hay-loft, is widely remote from the little flight of steps leading into that place, and as unlike it as truth to falsehood.

Besides, at this flight of steps is part of the room itself, how is it possible that a person who had ever been confined there, but for one hour, should in three days after be so very ignorant?

For such ignorance, and for such a mistake, what other reason can be fairly assigned, but that she never had been there before?

Canning being afterwards taken into the hay-loft, (where the hay was) fixed upon that to be the room.

After what had passed I will appeal to the most partial man living, if she could have fixed upon this place, was it not for the circumstance neither she or *Skarrat* knew of before.

Upon her trial, *Adamson* (to whose lot it fell to meet the chaise) declared he did not indeed tell her that there was hay in the room but only asked her if there was any hay in the room.

In the like manner *Skarrat* and *Adamson* acknowledged upon the trial, that they asked her many other questions concerning her many other questions concerning the things which were there, but with-prooofing a single question to her concerning what was not there. Such was the candid method they pursued to come at the truth.

Many more such just remarks is made by this worthy magistrate, who, all along has acted worthy of the character becoming his high station. He has been insulted and ill us'd, but it is hoped the eyes of the public will now be open'd.

Within a few days before the daughter's supposed return, the mother (as it appeared from her own mouth) acquainted several of her neighbours, that she had been at the *Conjuror's*, that he bid her be easy, that her daughter was under an old Woman, and would return home safe in a few Days.

A true prophecy, indeed! but whence came this *Cunning Man* by all this knowledge?---not from the Mother surely, she herself went to be informed: besides, every one knows, that the pretenders to that art never draw the secret from their customers and retail it them again.

But to be serious: if the *Conjuror* really told the Mother so, 'tis certain, that he must have received this intelligence from one, who knew under whose care the Daughter was; and if he did not, the conclusion is apparent.

Under whose directions *Canning* was, upon what occasion, and to whom the *Bed-Gown* belongs, every person will now form his own conjecture.

Far from triumphing at the Girl's Conviction, wicked as she is, I wish her discovery had been the means of intitling her to mercy, and of bringing those more guilty to justice: but this could not be expected; the curtain, behind which the secret lay, was too closely drawn; and none but her own friends permitted to see her.---And those who before protected her, as the tool of their politricks, in opposition to me, must not now desert her.

Note. It is impossible to give a better Account in this Sheet of Paper of Sir Crisp Gascoyne's Conduct; for the Pamphlet that is published is two Shillings price; but the Publick may be assured, that on Monday next the Whole will be publish'd in Farthing Numbers, and come at the easy Price of 4 d. very correctly printed.

F I N I S.

Printed by G. Castle in Short's Gardens.